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Law enforcement officers, agencies honored for seat belt, child restraint enforcement

Ceremony salutes efforts to save lives on Kentucky roadways

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 12, 2017) — The Kentucky Office of Highway Safety (KOHS) today honored law enforcement officers from 122 agencies across the Commonwealth for their efforts to increase the use of seat belts and child restraints in motor vehicles.

The Governor's Occupant Protection Awards ceremony was held at the Hyatt Regency in Lexington. Awards were presented to officers with the most occupant protection citations in each agency and division. There are six divisions, broken down by number of officers within the agency, and a division for Kentucky State Police.

"These officers, their departments and agencies render a great service for public safety by enforcing our occupant protection laws," KOHS Executive Director Noelle Hunter said before presenting the awards. "It comes down to this: Officers would rather write a seat belt or car restraint citation than make a death notification."

All winners received a highway safety coin while each division winner was presented with an encased commemorative baseball bat from Louisville Slugger, a Kentucky historic industry leader.

"I'm honored to introduce the inaugural Highway Safety All-Star Award at today's ceremony," said National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Regional Administrator Dr. Beth Baker. "By partnering with Louisville Slugger, an iconic Kentucky institution, we are recognizing those who go above and beyond to aid our mission of saving lives on Kentucky roadways. An all-star is defined as 'outstanding performers or participants' and these law enforcement officers embody those characteristics."

According to the NHTSA, seat belts, when worn correctly, are proven to reduce the risk of fatal injuries to front-seat occupants by 45 percent – and by 60 percent in pickup trucks, SUVs and minivans. Also according to NHTSA, a properly installed, belt-positioning booster seat lowers the risk of injury to children by nearly 60 percent, compared with seat belts alone.

"We continue to see improvement, and I applaud Kentucky's efforts to raise awareness and increase enforcement of this life-saving measure," said Dr. Baker. "Writing citations is not a strategy designed to increase arrests; in fact, it may yield in decreased citation counts over time, which is our goal."

With the passage of the primary law, Kentucky's seat belt usage rate increased from 67 percent in 2006 to 86.5 percent in 2016. The national seat belt usage rate is 90.1 percent.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The attached sheet identifies individual and overall division award recipients.

PHOTOS: All photos can be viewed [here](#). Division winner photos are attached. Each recipient is pictured with NHTSA Regional Administrator Beth Baker and KOHS Executive Director Dr. Noelle Hunter.

Division One (1-10 officers): Officer Greg Raque, Anchorage Police Department

Division Two (11-25 officers): Deputy Jerry Hardin, Nelson County Sheriff's Office (*no photo*)

Division Three (26-50 officers): Deputy Rick Cloyd, Laurel County Sheriff's Office

Division Four (51-100 officers): Officer Melissa Dillon, Paducah Police Department

Division Five (101+ officers): Officer Brandon Muravchick, Lexington Police Department

Division Six (Kentucky State Police): Trooper Barrett Brewer, KSP Post Five